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THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE
ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

PRINCIPLES OF PALEOGEOGRAPHY¹

INTRODUCTION

THE science of the geography of past geologic periods, which is sometimes known as paleogeography, is a young science that has all its future before it. It springs from several older sciences: geography, geology, meteorology and paleontology; and in its development it must rest upon their general principles.

Paleogeography may be defined as the science of geography of all periods of the globe's history since earth, air, and water assumed those states in which they now exist. The science does not extend to any earlier state of the world. But from the time of the earliest lands, seas, and atmosphere to the present, the sequence of geographic conditions comprises the facts of paleogeography.

The science is very comprehensive. It includes not only the arrangement of continents and oceans and their individual features, but also the topography of lands, the circulation of oceanic waters and of the atmosphere, the climate, and the distribution of life, which were characteristic of the earth's surface during any particular epoch. It must trace the changes in these features from epoch to epoch, and with the aid of all allied physical and biological sciences, paleogeography should search out the ultimate causes which actuate the de-

¹ Address of the vice-president and chairman of Section E—Geology and Geography. American Association for the Advancement of Science, Boston, December 28, 1909.